A LISTING OF THE CLAIMS IS PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

1. (previously presented) A network appliance, comprising:

at least one platform service stored in memory, the at least one platform server executable by a processing device;

a service monitor stored in memory and executable by a processor to monitor a working status of the at least one platform service when executed from memory, the service monitor using interprocess communications, the working status indicating that the at least one platform service is running, not running, or starting; and

a load balancer stored in memory and executable by a processor to perform load balancing on received communications based on at least the working status of the at least one platform service.

2. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 1, further comprising a backplane interface through which the network appliance exchanges data with another device.

3. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 2, wherein the another device hosts at least one second platform service stored in memory, and the service monitor is executable to monitor a working status of the at least one second platform service using communications transmitted over the backplane.

4. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 1, further comprising an interface monitor stored in memory and executable to monitor a working status of interfaces and connections employed by the network appliance.

5. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 1, wherein the at least one platform service is an access method service.

6. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 5, wherein the access method service is a virtual private network service.

7. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 5, wherein the access method service is an extranet Web service.

8. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 1, further comprising a node manager stored in memory and executable to determine the working status of the at least one platform service and provide the determined working status of the at least one platform service to the service monitor.

9. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 1, further comprising a distributed cache service that caches information relating to at least one platform service on another network appliance.

10. (previously presented) The network appliance of claim 9, wherein the at least one platform service is an access method service, and the information cached includes authentication information and encryption key information for encryption sessions hosted by the access method service.

11. (previously presented) A system for balancing loads in a network, the system comprising:

a first network appliance having:

at least one first platform service stored in memory,

a service monitor stored in memory and executable to monitor a working status of the at least one first platform service when executed from memory, the service monitor using interprocess communications, the working status indicating that the at least platform service is running, not running, or starting; and

a first load balancer stored in memory and executable to perform load balancing on communications received by the first network appliance based on at least the working status of the at least one first platform service, the working status indicating whether the at least one platform service is running; and

a second network appliance having:

at least one second platform service stored in memory, and

a second load balancer stored in memory and executable to perform load balancing on communications received by the second network appliance, wherein the first network appliance is configured to receive all client communications to the network unless the first load balancer fails, and the second network appliance is configured to receive all client communications to the network if the first load balancer fails.

12. (previously presented) The system of claim 11, wherein the second network appliance further includes a second service monitor stored in memory and executable to monitor a working status of the at least one second platform service using interprocess communications.

13. (cancelled)

14. (previously presented) The system of claim 11, wherein the at least one first platform service is an access method service.

15. (previously presented) The system of claim 14, wherein the access method service is a virtual private network service.

16. (previously presented) The system of claim 14, wherein the access method service is an extranet Web service.

17. (previously presented) The system of claim 11, wherein the at least one second platform service is an access method service.

18. (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the access method service is a virtual private network service.

19. (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the access method service is an extranet Web service.

20. (previously presented) A method of processing client communications to a network comprising:

receiving a first client communication at a first network appliance hosting at least one first platform service;

employing a load balancer hosted by the first network appliance to direct the first client communication to the at least one first platform service hosted by the first network appliance based on at least a working status of the at least one first platform service, the working status indicating that the at least one platform service is running, not running, or starting;

receiving a second client communication at the first network appliance; and

employing the load balancer to direct the second client communication to a second platform service hosted by a second network appliance based on at least the working status of the at least one first platform service and a working status of the second platform service.

21. (previously presented) The method of claim 20, further comprising:

analyzing the first client communication to determine if the first client communication includes association data indicating that the first client communication is associated with the at least one first platform service; and

determining that the first client communication includes association data indicating that the first communication is associated with the at least one first platform service.

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 21, wherein the association data is a session identifier identifying an encryption session maintained by the at least one first platform service.

23. (previously presented) The method of claim 20, further comprising:

executing a load balancing algorithm to determine whether the second client communication should be directed to the second platform service; and

determining that the second client communication should be directed to the second platform service based upon results of the executed load balancing algorithm.

24. - 25. (cancelled)